Novelist Gives Manuscript to CIA With Plea That It Not Be Censored

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Former CIA officer Frank Snepp turned over the manuscript of a new novel to the CIA this week with a plea that it be returned to him without undergoing censorship.

Agency officials indicated yesterday that the plea would be rejected. "As far as I am able to determine," CIA spokesman Dale Peterson said last night, the manuscript will be reviewed."

Complying with court orders stemming from the CIA-unauthorized publication of his first book, a work of nonfiction, Snepp submitted his new manuscript on Tuesday to CIA deputy general counsel Ernest Mayerfeld. The novel, entitled "Convergence of Interest," is a fictional account of a CIA official who becomes involved in the assassination of President Kennedy.

In a letter accompanying the manuscript, Snepp argued that the secrecy agreement he signed with the CIA in 1968 "does not reach fiction," and said he was submitting his newest book only because of court decrees, including a Supreme Court decision, arising from his earlier book, "Decent Interval."

In doing so, however, Snepp said that "as an American, I am appalled and frightened" by the requirement. He said he hoped the CIA would agree with him that novels "are not subject to the agency's clearing process. If, however, you insist on clearing it, you will be setting a terrible precedent, opening the way to a regime of censorship and government manipulation of the individual that can know no limits."

Peterson said the agency's publication review board has "the responsibility" to review fiction as well as nonfiction dealing with intelligence matters if the authors have signed secrecy agreements with the CIA. He said the agency has reviewed some fiction before.

Snepp has been ordered to relinquish the profits from "Decent Interval," an account of the last days of the American withdrawal from Vietnam, because he failed to submit the book for CIA review.